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# Simmons: Time for change at CIA

■ U.S. Rep. Simmons' comments come after the CIA chief announces he is resigning. (See related story on Page 8)

By Nicole Souza  
Special to The Sun

MYSTIC — Hours after CIA Agency Director George Tenet announced his resignation, U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd Dist. — a former CIA operations officer — welcomed the change at the top of the agency and called for a return to more traditional espionage.

Simmons, of Stonington, speaking at a press conference from his Mystic headquarters, said that, while Tenet has been described as a "caretaker" as head of the agency, he should have been more of a "risk taker."

"The best way to go after terrorists is with other people and that's the area where we're weakest," Simmons said, criticizing intelligence efforts. "Now is the time for new leadership and change and reform and redirecting at the CIA ... America cannot continue to be a great power and cannot continue to protect its citizens if we don't have the eyes and the ears that the intelligence community provides to us."

The embattled Tenet, struggling with fallout from the Sept. 11 tragedy and criticism over intelligence mistakes in Iraq, announced Thursday that he soon plans to

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resign. The Democratic appointee, Tenet is said to have overcome intelligence failures under his tenure because of his close relationship to President Bush.

Although Tenet announced he was leaving for personal reasons, members of Congress have speculated he may have been pushed out of office. Former CIA Director Stansfield Turner was also quoted as saying he believed Tenet had been pushed out.

Simmons said he doesn't "give much stock" to what Turner, a retired Navy admiral, has to say, but he pointed to intelligence failures leading up to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and those concerning Iraqi weapons of mass destruction as reasons to greet the change of command with open arms.

Simmons said he is confident in the abilities of Tenet's temporary replacement, his deputy, John McLaughlin. But the second-term Connecticut congressman also used Thursday night as an opportunity to issue his support for Rep. Porter Goss, R-Fla., chairman of the House Committee on Intelligence, as a permanent replacement. Other

potential successors, according to the Associated Press, include Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, former Sen. Bob Kerrey (D-Neb.), and former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

As the search begins, Simmons was optimistic that central intelligence issues would return to the forefront as America decides how to reform and reshape its spy agency. Whether that means a creating a better clandestine

service or his call for the agency to engage in more traditional spying tactics to penetrate terrorist organizations, Simmons said, will be up to America to decide. Simmons said he would also push for the elimination of a ban on employing spies that have committed human rights violations.

"Tenet's resignation," Simmons said, "opens up a whole range of issues for discussion."

[nsouza\\_mrp@comcast.net](mailto:nsouza_mrp@comcast.net)

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